

STATE OF COLORADO

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

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Roy Romer
Governor

April 27, 1987

Mr. Dominick Sanchini
President
Rockwell International Rocky Flats Plant
P.O. Box 464
Golden, Colorado 80402-0464

Dear Mr. Sanchini:

As Governor, one of my primary responsibilities is to protect the health and safety of the people of Colorado. There is no responsibility I take more seriously.

I am aware that a ten-day trial burn of hazardous and mixed waste at the Rockwell International Rocky Flats Plant is tentatively scheduled to commence May 16, 1987. I hereby request that the commencement of the trial burn be delayed pending the completion of three current investigations concerning waste incineration. I make this exceptional request because I am convinced that it is in the best interests of Colorado citizens' health and safety.

The three investigations to which I refer are:

- o The Colorado Department of Health inquiry concerning certain technical aspects of the trial burn. Until these questions are answered satisfactorily, the Department will not be comfortable with the trial burn taking place.
- o At the Health Department's request, the Federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's health risk assessment of the trial burn. An assessment of the health risks associated with the innovative incineration technique proposed by Rocky Flats is, in my view, essential to a decision about whether the trial burn should occur.
- o Representative David Skaggs' independent panel of experts forming to review the incineration proposal. It is my understanding that Rep. Skaggs is also requesting a delay of the trial burn pending the completion of this panel's

ADMIN RECORD

SW-A-003845

Mr. Dominick Sanchini
April 27, 1987
Page Two

inquiries. I endorse Rep. Skaggs' efforts to bring additional scientific expertise to bear on this issue, and I concur with his desire to hold off on the trial burn until the panel has had a chance to evaluate its possible effects.

I believe that the health and safety of Colorado citizens will be best protected by delaying the trial burn until all three of these investigations have been completed.

I am aware that incineration of wastes at Rocky Flats is one solution to the thorny problem of dealing with wastes at the plant. I am also aware that rejecting incineration in effect forces officials to consider either storing the waste on-site or transporting it over the state's highways or railways for disposal elsewhere. Each of these options carries its own risks, which must be weighed against the risks of incineration.

My request for delay should not be construed as either opposition to or endorsement of the incineration process being proposed. My sole concern is that adequate investigation of the risks involved is done prior to commencing incineration.

Finally, as public officials mindful that these wastes are products of our national defense strategy, we should all do what we can to hasten the day when the construction and maintenance of nuclear weapons will no longer be deemed necessary to our national security. Until that day, these wastes will continue to be produced and we must make rational decisions about how best to deal with them.

More than one half of Colorado's citizens -- some 1.7 million people -- live within 30 miles of the Rocky Flats Plant. Their safety and peace of mind must be my paramount concern. Therefore, until I am secure in the belief that incineration is a safe way to dispose of the hazardous and mixed wastes at Rocky Flats, I must request that you delay the trial burn.

Sincerely,


Roy Romer
Governor

cc: Mr. Earl Whiteman, DOE